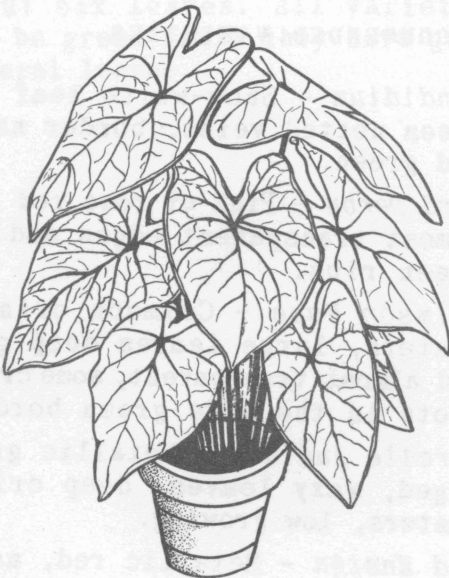


Caladiums

ADD COLOR

TO HOMES AND GARDENS



TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
G. G. Gibson, Director, College Station, Texas

Caladiums Add Color to Homes and Gardens

SADIE HATFIELD

Extension Specialist in Homestead Improvement
Texas A. & M. College System

The fancy-leaved caladium (*Caladium bicolor*) from tropical South America, popular as a pot plant, also can be used to brighten summer gardens. From a color harmony standpoint, some highly colored varieties have a more pleasing effect when one kind is planted in each bed.

RECOMMENDED VARIETIES

Candidum - Snow-white leaf with green netted veins, border narrow and green.

Lord Derby - Pink or rose red leaf, almost transparent edges and deep green ribs.

Crimson Wave - Crimson crinkled centers, large leaves deep green and almost transparent, some crimson spots in the wide green borders.

Porcile Auglais - Metallic green-edged, waxy leaves, deep crimson centers, low growing.

Red Ensign - Metallic red, narrow green border, very bright coloration, medium height.

Spangled Banner - Red glowing leaves, ribs darker red, numerous pink spots.

Thomas Tomlinson - Crimson center, crimson blotches in green border, many leaves.

The elephantear (*Colocasia esculenta*) is easily grown outside. If heavily mulched, it will survive winters in Central Texas. Farther south, it needs less winter protection. The large green elephantear leaves make a pleasing contrast with the texture of most shrubs.

OUTDOOR PLANTING

Wait until all danger of frost is past to plant out in the open. Plant the caladium tuber in moderately rich beds prepared as for most summer flowers. Give adequate water and good drainage. Overwatering will decay the tubers. Moisture should be checked by digging down a few inches in the bed. It is important to keep the soil moist at all times, but not soggy. Tubers should be planted 2 inches deep and 18 inches apart. Pack the soil firmly around them.

If caladiums are started indoors, gradually harden them to outdoor conditions by gradually exposing to outside conditions. For early plants, sprout the tubers in peat moss, sand or loose soil. Set into larger pots or outdoors as soon as the roots begin to spread. If a bloom bud starts up, pinch it off or the plant will produce few leaves.

When plant food is needed for proper growth, apply 1 tablespoon of 5-10-5 or 4-12-4 per plant as a sidedressing three times during the growing season.

INDOOR PLANTING

The caladium grows best at temperatures of 80 to 90 degrees F.

and makes an excellent house plant. Prepare a soil mixture for the pot of one part sand, one part peat and one part soil. When a pale color or poor growth is evident, apply a sidedressing of 5-10-5 or 4-12-4 fertilizer. Use 1 teaspoon to a 6-inch pot.

INSECTS

Sucking insects, such as spider mites, may cause leaves to curl and dry or become mottled. Malathion spray applied according to directions on the package or a 4 percent malathion dust will control most of them. A 3 percent aramite dust will control the Western mite as well as red spider. Pillbugs and other leaf-eating pests can be controlled with 5 percent chlordane dust or 5 percent DDT dust or with prepared baits. Follow the directions on the insecticide package. For more detailed information, ask for a copy of L-199, *Texas Guide for Controlling Insects on Ornamental Plants*.

STORAGE OF TUBERS

When the leaves begin to turn brown or droop in September or October, stop the fertilizer applications and decrease the water gradually until the leaves begin to die. Lift the tubers from the soil and pack them in peat moss or dry sand in a shady, cool place. Keep the tubers in storage until April or May, but do not allow them to freeze. The proper storage temperature is about 70 degrees F. Tubers left in the soil will decay.

LEAVES FOR DECORATIONS

Leaves cut and used as indoor decorations last several days if

the freshly cut stems are plunged into hot and then cold water. The water should be as hot as the hand can bear. Allow the leaf stems to stay in the hot water until it has cooled. Then place them in cold water from the hydrant. Sometimes wilted leaves can be revived with the hot-and-cold water treatment.

GROWING CALADIUMS FROM SEED

Some varieties of caladium can be started from seed, but they may not come true to color. Seed are difficult to obtain and generally are used only by plant breeders for new varieties which they propagate vegetatively. Unusual plants are sometimes developed in this way. Start the seed in a greenhouse or in pots early in the year. Transplant the seedlings when they have about six leaves. All varieties may be green until they have grown several leaves.

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, The Texas A. & M. College System and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914.